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# How and why to do a PhD in Heidelberg?

Dr. Helke Hillebrand

Administrative Director  
Graduate Academy  
Heidelberg University

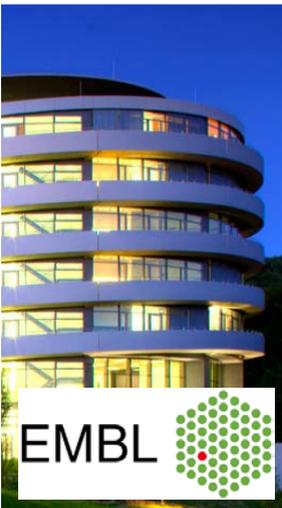
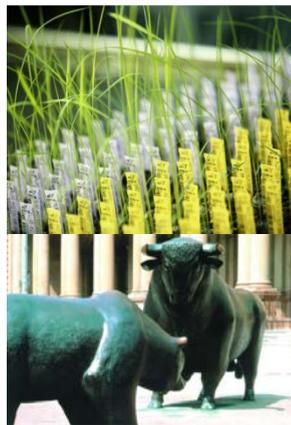
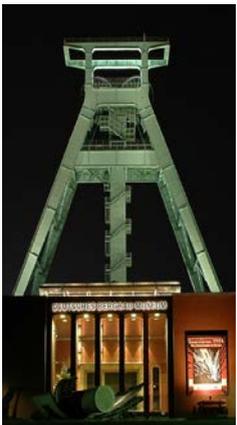
Heidelberg, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019



# Who am I?



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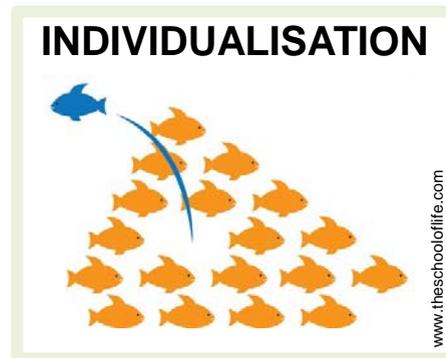
# Who are we?



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The **Graduate Academy** serves as

- A **central point of contact and support** for young researchers (PhD and postdoctoral level) and their mentors.
- A dedicated provider for efficient and effective tools for **tailor-made career development** towards supporting the transition into academic careers and facilitating the identification of ambitious career opportunities outside of academia.
- A facilitator to enable the **transfer of science into society**.



# Our mission



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metadisciplinary skills!

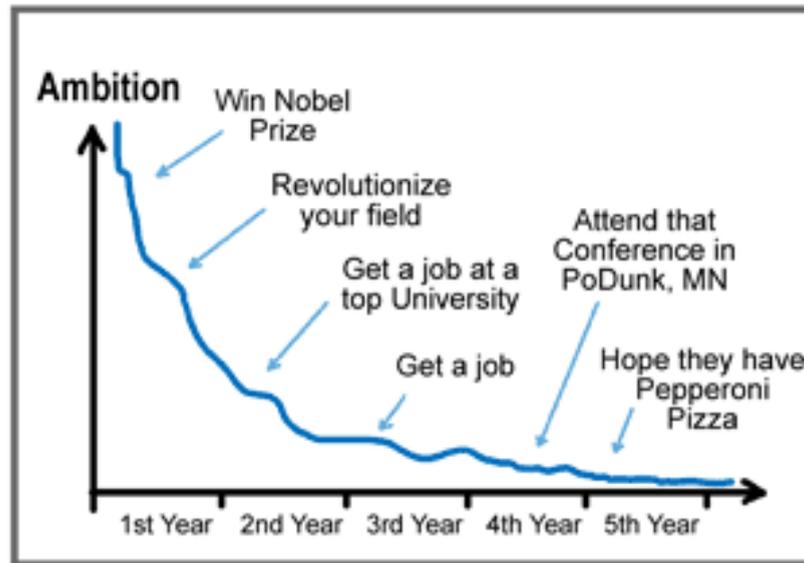
Serving excellent students  
carefully attended to  
by 12 different faculties  
across campus !



# Cornerstones of the PhD lifecycle...



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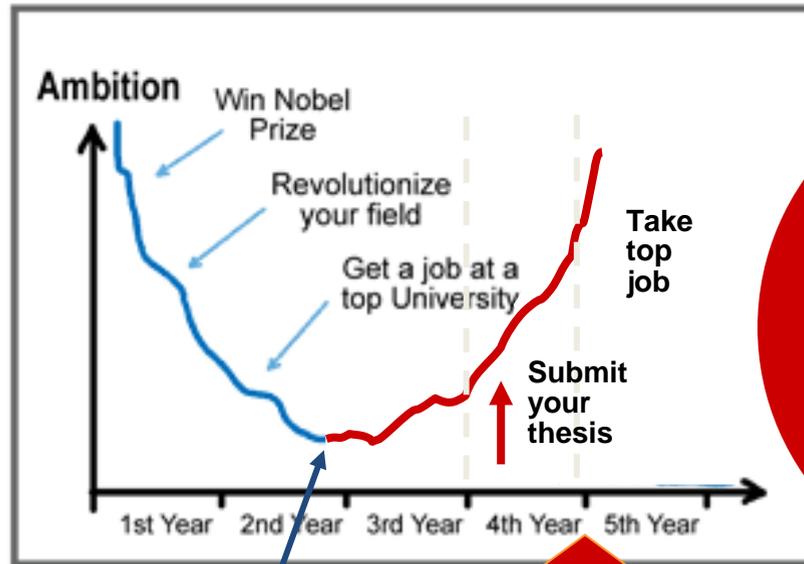


JORGE CHAM © 2008  
[WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM](http://WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM)

# Cornerstones of the PhD lifecycle...



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WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

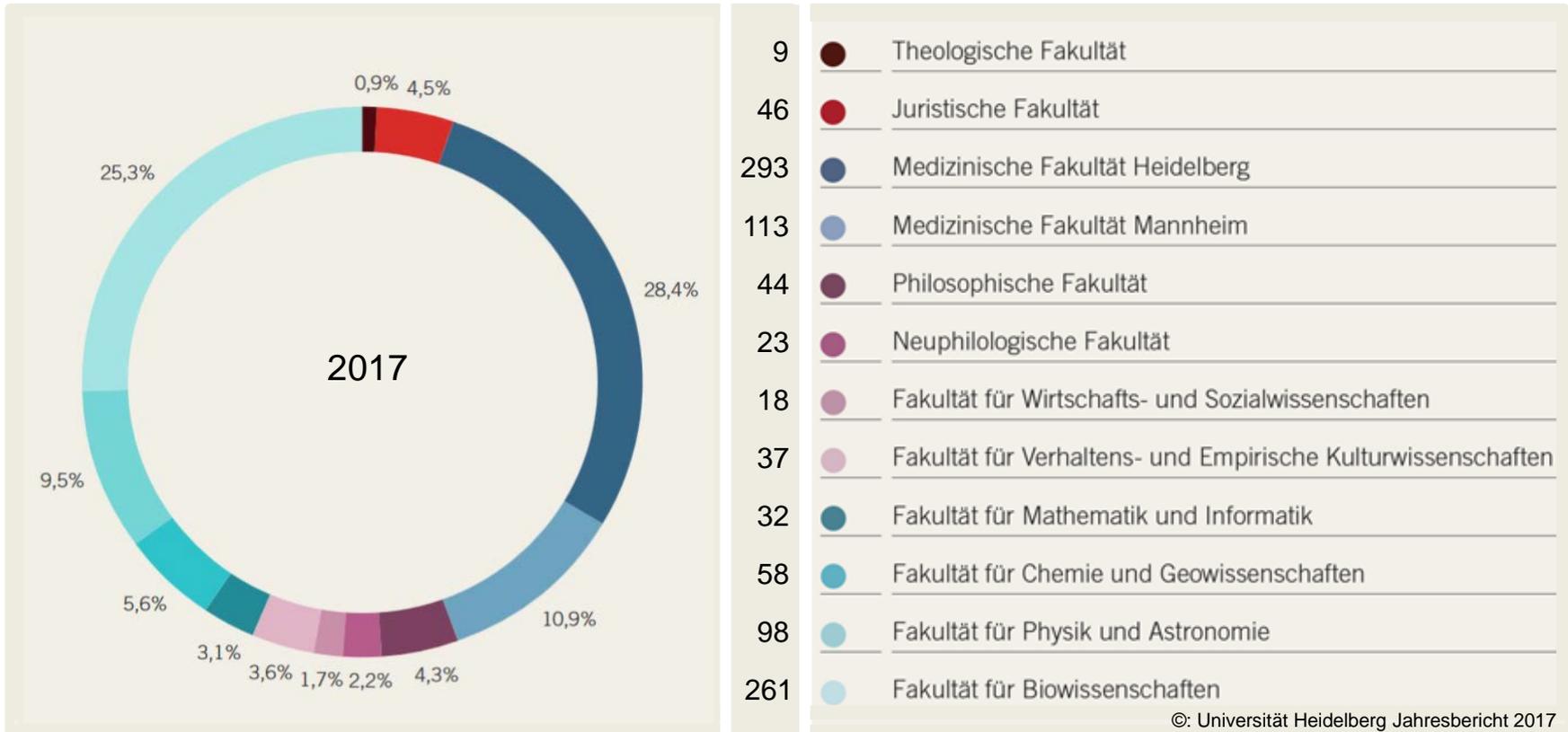
Successfully fight your  
2nd year depression



# Our target audiences in numbers



- About 1200 doctorates per year (28.500 in DE in 2017)
  - Diversity matters: About 25% international PhD students
  - Gender balance: About 50% female and male graduates



# Our target audiences in numbers



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- About 1200 doctorates per year
- Four major Graduate Schools  
(Life Sciences, Mathematics, Physics, Humanities & Social Sciences)
- More than 40 structured PhD Programs  
(DFG, Excellence Cluster, EU-ITN, LGFG (MWK), participation in IMPRSs and Helmholtz International Graduate Schools, else)
- About 500 postdoctoral researchers\*

## Heidelberg University in international comparison

<http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/university/rankings/>

### **Best German university (for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive time) - Shanghai Ranking 2018**

University ranks 47<sup>nd</sup> worldwide and 12<sup>th</sup> in Europe (August 15, 2018)

### **Heidelberg University ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in Germany - QS World University Ranking 2018/2019**

University ranks 64<sup>th</sup> worldwide, 18<sup>th</sup> in Europe and 3<sup>rd</sup>/3 in Germany (June 7, 2018)

### **Ruperto Carola among the world's top 50 - THE Ranking 2018/2019**

University ranks 47<sup>th</sup> worldwide, 14<sup>th</sup> in Europe and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Germany (September 26, 2018)

### **Heidelberg University ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in Germany – THE Employability Ranking 2017**

University ranks 38<sup>th</sup> worldwide, 15<sup>th</sup> in Europe and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Germany (November 14, 2018)

\* Postdoctoral researchers within five years after completion of PhD

# Who are YOU?



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Where are you from?



What are you passionate about?



What do you most enjoy doing?



What is your way to enjoy academia?

What is your career dream?



What do you expect from doing/gaining a PhD?





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# What's in for you?



# What do we offer today?

Core activities Graduate Academy:

- Information services & consultancy  
(Beratung)
- Sponsorship for doctoral candidates  
(Förderung)
- Career development support  
(Seminarprogramm/ Karriereentwicklung)
- Service on demand for faculties & structured programs: Supporting the advancement of excellent PhD framework conditions (e.g. *heiDOCS*)



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# Information services & consultancy



Janelle  
Ramaley



Chiara  
Rottaro



David  
Jara



Anna-Lena  
Klein



# Getting prepared



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## The official stuff:

- Visa?
- Health insurance?
- Transcripts of your degree certificates?  
(never ever hand in any originals!!!)
- How to?
  - Registration in heiDOCS (Doktorandenportal; ZDB)
  - Supervision agreement (Betreuungsvereinbarung)
  - Admission to faculty (Annahme als Doktorand)
  - Enrollment at university (Immatrikulation)
  - Binational Doctoral Training (Cotutelle)
  - ...

## On a private level:

- Accommodation?
- Transportation?
- Settling in as a family
- ...



# Online doctoral file - heiDOCS portal



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DEZERNAT  
STUDIUM UND LEHRE



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## Online Doctoral File

Please register to the heiDOCS-Portal at:

[www.uni-heidelberg.de/universitaet/heidocs](http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/universitaet/heidocs)

Zentrales Doktorandenbüro ·  
Seminarstraße 2 · 69117 Heidelberg  
Support Online-Promotionsakte · Tel. +49  
6221 54-12204 · [zdb@uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:zdb@uni-heidelberg.de)



Anke Rösel

Christine Schilling

Andreas Klinkhof



# Getting started



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## 1.) Welcome events

## 2.) Welcome pack

## 3.) Teaser Trainings: *Primers for Predocs*

An introductory seminar series:

### Dimensions:

- 10-12 sessions, one per week, starting each semester from afresh

### Format:

- **Modular:** each of the weekly sessions is dedicated to a specific topic
- **Short:** sessions take half a day max.
- **Interactive:** short expert presentation(s) followed by panel discussion and/or small group discussions
- **Distributed:** integrative schedule including all campus areas



NEW!



# Sponsorship for doctoral candidates



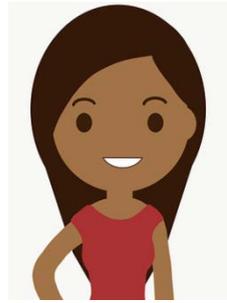
Elif  
Avcu



Birgit  
Bell



David  
Jara



Janina  
Diefenbach



Michael Kraft



# Sponsorship for doctoral candidates – *status quo*



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## ■ Fellowships for doctoral candidates (Landesgraduiertenförderung; LGF)

- Individual 3-year fellowships
- Completion fellowships (3-6 month)
- Small-scale PhD programs (Promotionskollegs)



## ■ Short term fellowships (DFG; Exzellenzinitiative)

- Travel stipends (courses, conferences, collaborations, field trips)
- Stipends for printing costs (contribution)
- Short term fellowships towards completion of PhD (also STIBET; DAAD)



**DFG** bewegt

## ■ Support towards identification of suitable (external) fellowships for (international) doctoral candidates

## ■ Support towards establishing a meaningful application/ exposé writing





# Career development support



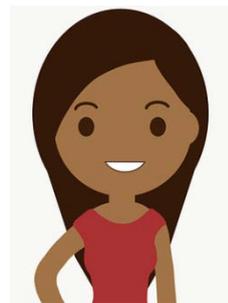
Dr. Berenike  
Schröder



Martin  
Stier



Jonathan  
Griffith



Jasmin  
Schröck





# Communication & events



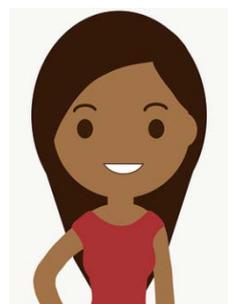
Dr. Claudia  
Falk



Eric Herbst



David  
Weinand



Gesa  
Siebert



# Career development support – future plans



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## Moving towards a three-layered strategy:

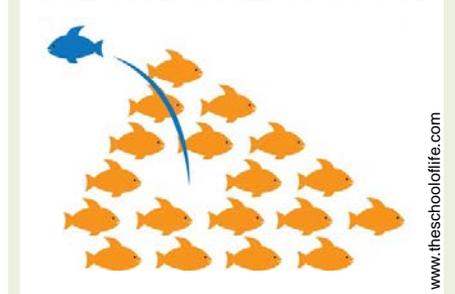
- **Foundations** – available every semester
  - Standard skill set
  - Courses, workshops & e-learning
- **Inspirational topics** – available annually
  - Builds on existing skills & knowledge
  - May require preparation
  - Face-to-face seminars & coaching
- **Overarching themes** - throughout the course of a PhD
  - Seminar & lecture series
  - Small group meetings
  - Excursions
  - ...

### ORIENTATION



<http://www.thebusinessclinic.org>

### INDIVIDUALISATION



[www.theschooloflife.com](http://www.theschooloflife.com)

### NETWORKING



<https://uberflip.cdmtrk.com>

# Career development support – *status quo*



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- Seminar and workshop program (20-25 courses p.a. in D & E)
- Academic writing support (D/E)
- German language courses
- Endnote/Citavi
- Heidelberg International Summer School 2018 (collaboration GA & D7)
- Collaborations across campus
  - PhD Offices across campus (“Zirkel Promotion”)
  - Graduate programs
  - Center for Teaching & Learning
  - Human Resources Department
  - Career Service (new program!)
  - International Relations Office
  - Heidelberg Alumni Office



GRADUIERTENAKADEMIE



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**SEMINARPROGRAMM SOMMER 2019**  
ZUSÄTZLICHE QUALIFIKATIONEN FÜR DOKTORANDINEN UND DOKTORANDEN  
TRANSFERABLE SKILLS FOR DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

APRIL		JUNI	
15.04.2019 9-17 Uhr	Übersetzen in Bewerbungsgeräth Prof. Lehmann	13./14.06.2019 9 am-5 pm	How to make Peer-Review Research Better Prof. Dr. Martin G. Michael
16.04. – 28.07.2019 6.55-7.45 pm	German Language Course Daf Lectures at the GZ	18.06.2019 20-26 Uhr	Einführung in das gewerbliche Rechtsschutz und die Patentrechtsche Jan-Ulrich Glup & Christoph Förster
17./18.04.2019 9-17 Uhr	Social Media Dr. Tobias Meier	19.06.2019 9 am-4 pm	Writing your research proposal for PhD candidates from the Humanities and Social Sciences David Jara
23./24.04.2019 9 am-5 pm	Writing Scientific Publications Dr. Christina Schätzle		Project Management Dr. Jan Stamm
25./26.04.2019 10 am-6 pm/9 am-5 pm	Application & Assessment Monika Pab-Rademacher		
29.04.2019 10-18 Uhr	Veranstaltungsorganisation an der Universität Tina Osterack		
MAI		AUGUST	
08.05.2019 10-17 Uhr	Neuer Publikationsformate Prof. Dr. Alexander Grottel	03./07.2019 am-5 pm	My Supervisor Ingo Schuster
22.05.2019 16-18 Uhr	Wie finanziere ich die Promotion? David Jara	22./23.07.2019 9-17 Uhr	Grundlagen des wissenschaftlichen Schreibens in den Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften Susanne Klug
23./24.05.2019 9-17 Uhr	Projektarbeit konzipieren Iris Lohmann		
28.05.2019 12.30-17.30 Uhr	Fachklausuren Dr. Markus Burger	08./09.08.2019 9-17 Uhr/9-13 Uhr	Mit Ihrer Stimme zum Erfolg Roman Jäberke
		21./22.08.2019 9 am-5 pm	Team Communication Dr. Natasha Fletcher

ANMELDUNG ZU DEN KURSEN  
REGISTRATION FOR OUR COURSES  
[www.graduiertenakademie.uni-heidelberg.de](http://www.graduiertenakademie.uni-heidelberg.de)



**NEW!**





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# What is a PhD?



# What is a PhD?

Philosophy Doctor

Doctor of philosophy  
doctor philosophiae



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PhD / Ph.D. / Dphil / Doctorate

*BR*

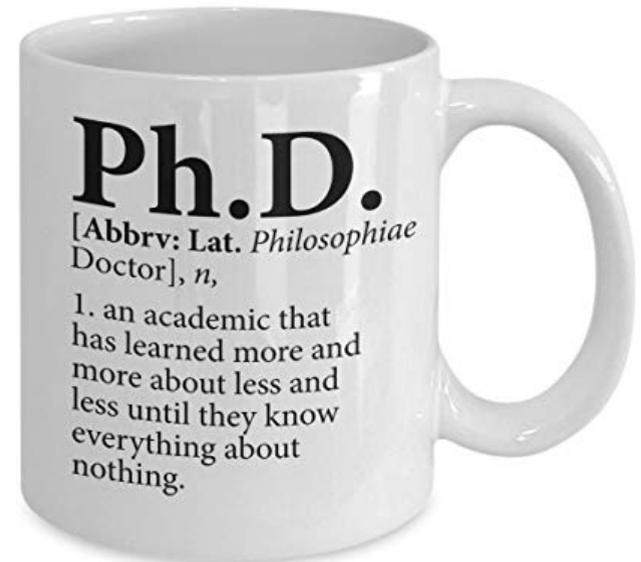
*AM*

*Latin*

*Germanism*

## Doctor of philosophy - Definition

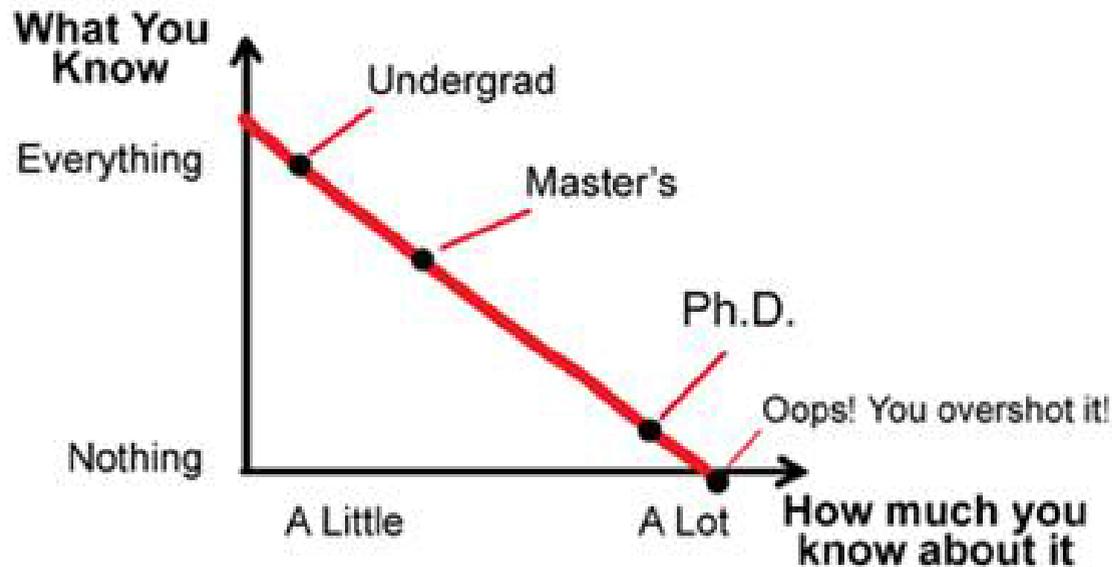
- **Oxford Dictionary:** the highest college or university degree, or someone who has this.
- **Wikipedia:** is the highest university degree that is conferred after a course of study by universities in most English-speaking countries.
- **Amazon.de:**



# How much of an academic career do I want?



What You Know vs How much you know about it



# What does a PhD entail?



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The degree is conferred for producing **independent, original research** that expands the limits of current knowledge (can be published in a peer-reviewed journal).

- Identifying a PhD-worthy **research question**
- Pursuing original independent **research**
- Writing a **dissertation** (thesis) about the new findings
- **Submitting** the dissertation
- **Defending** the thesis (against experts in the field)
- **Publishing** the findings
- Being **promoted** to PhD (award of the title)
- Using the **title** Doctor (as awarded!!!)
  - In non-English-speaking countries, variants such as "Dr. phil.", "Dr. rer. nat.", "Dr. med." are in use.
  - In English spoken countries often abbreviated "Dr" or "Dr." or with post-nominal letters such as "Ph.D.", "PhD", or "DPhil" (depending on the awarding institution).
  - Never use both, the title and post-nominals, at the same time!

*The proper etiquette associated with this usage of the doctoral degree may also be subject to the professional ethics of the own scholarly field, culture, or society*

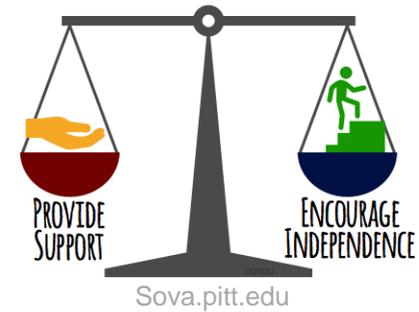
# What is special about doing a PhD?



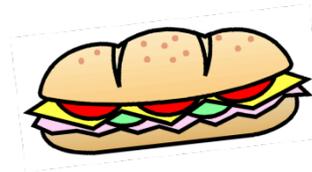
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- You are not a student any more
- At Heidelberg University: PhD research is the first phase of a professional research experience and NOT(!) a third cycle of studies

- Independence (various degrees of)



- Life in a sandwich position



- Preparing for growth and leadership



# What is expected from me when doing a PhD? (I)



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**Exhausted or ready for taking off?**



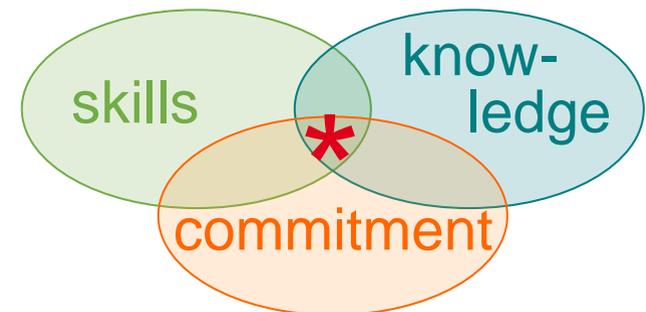
# What is expected from me when doing a PhD? (II)



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- Passion to perform ✓
- Taking pleasure in (interdisciplinary) thinking, in writing and in contributing
- A profile matching a supervisor's mentor's expectations regarding the requirements of a specific project
- Enthusiasm, curiosity, dedication, creativity, diligence ...

- Becoming a valuable team member!



\* where excellence originates ...

# Why to do a PhD?

X good reasons (not do) do a PhD...

- Excited about learning and solving problems
- In love with thinking, writing & freedom of thought
- Enthusiastic about doing research
- Genuinely interested in the subject area
- Want to set the stage for life-long learning
- Want the title
- Deemed important for my career aspirations
- Want to become a professor



- Interested in the training programme
- Admire my supervisor
- Curious about the university doings



- I was always a successful & diligent student
- No better job in sight



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# How to prepare for a PhD? (I)



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- Talk and listen to your peers
  - <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07332-x>  
Article by recent PhD graduate Lucy A. Taylor sharing the advice she and her colleagues wish they had received (06/11/2018):  
Twenty things I wish I'd known when I started my PhD.
- Test your abilities (validated tests only!)
  - <https://www.academics.de/angebote/promotion-test-soll-ich-promovieren> *Academics* in collaboration with Heidelberg University (Institute for Psychology) is developing a test for assessing personality traits, skills and qualifications relevant for a successful PhD (*beta-version* only).
  - <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/> A free, web-based career-planning tool that was created to help graduate students and postdocs in the sciences define and pursue their career goals.
  - <https://www.bachelorprint.de/promotion>  
Checklists by Schneider & Molitor (on-line or book) - basis for the 2004 nation-wide THESIS-Study)
- Talk to your previous academic advisor(s) & mentor(s)



# How to prepare for a PhD? (II)



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- What is the subject area/research question you are interested in?
- Identify your “doctorfather” or “doctormother”
- Agree on a PhD-worthy research topic
- Set-up your personal funding plan
- Get a copy of your faculty’s “Promotionsordnung” – become acquainted with the specific rules and regulations
- Sign a “supervision agreement”
- Register with heiDOCS – and create your personal copy of the on-line PhD file
- Apply for admission as a PhD candidate with your faculty
- Register with Heidelberg University as a PhD-student (Immatriculation for PhD candidates)
- Focus on your research and your skills portfolio!



# How to finance a PhD?



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- Your PhD is financed by integration into your (university) supervisor's team:
  - Departmental position; (most likely) integrated in research and teaching at your department
  - Third party funding
  - You pursue an "external" PhD
- You are pursuing a job outside of your PhD project
  - You hold a contract somewhere within the university (e.g. "Geprüfte Wissenschaftliche Hilfskraft")
  - You have a job elsewhere
- You hold a fellowship/ you are (preparing to) applying for a fellowship
- You are naturally born rich 😊

# How to structure a PhD?



## Individual PhD

## Structured PhD

### Typical characteristics

- Single supervisor
- Thesis subject solely agreed upon with supervisor; may or may not be embedded in broader context
- No obligatory course work
- No formal definition for time-to-submission

co-tutelles, research abroad;  
conferences &  
summer schools;  
meta-disciplinary skills training &  
Graduate Academy

### Typical characteristics

- Multiple supervisors/mentors (thesis advisory committee (TAC))
- Research topic is embedded in a doctoral program [Promotionskolleg (5-10), Graduiertenkolleg (*up to 25*), Graduiertenschule ( $\geq 100$ )]
- Requires formal application/admission
- Overarching funding/funding rules
- Programs define (disciplinary) training curricula
- Programs are set for 3-4 years of PhD research until submission
- Regular performance reviews

# How to structure a PhD?



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## Individual PhD

## Structured PhD

- Participate in welcome events (department, GS, GA, else)
- Get to know your peers and colleagues
- Network in an interdisciplinary fashion
- Go to lectures, PhD seminars, else...
- Get organized: Make sure to have regular meetings with your supervisor(s), compile your strategic questions, foster your critical thinking
- Get acquainted with basics in project management, research ethics & good scientific practice, avoiding plagiarism, mental health, statistics, ...
- Keep talking & writing - about your research, your career aspirations, your doubts, your disappointments, your successes
- Seek opportunities for teaching in your field and for presenting your work
- Try out applying for funding – travel, conferences, research stays, ...
- Continuously work on your portfolio of qualifications and skills
- Don't forget to strive for submission!

# Training throughout your PhD



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## ■ Continuous scientific training

- Seize the opportunities on campus to go to lectures that help you to develop a broad (interdisciplinary) scientific overview and to network

## ■ Mandatory courses

- Towards establishing equivalency of the degree you earned previously and the requirements of Heidelberg University – assessed in the context of faculty admission
- Within the context of your PhD program/ Graduate School

## ■ Voluntary courses & conferences – make it part of your work plan

- Scientific courses/summer schools to foster subject-related expertise
- Conferences (unwritten rule: participation usually requires own active contribution)
- Vocational skills training & career development
- Self-assessment tools

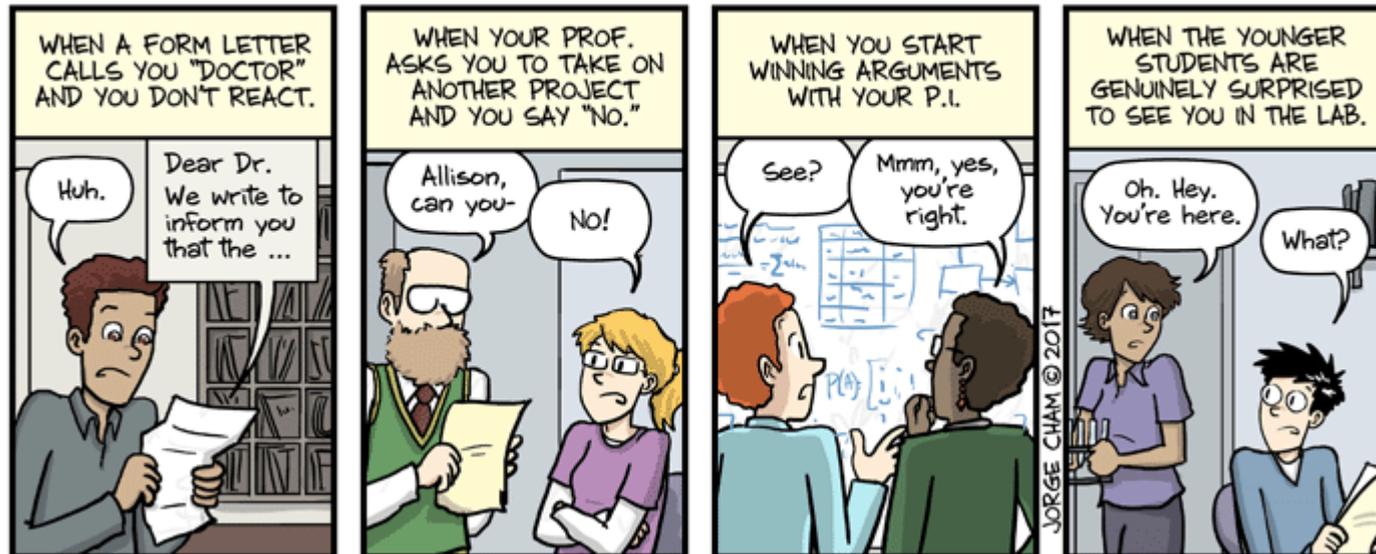




# How do I know I am ready to graduate?



## SIGNS YOU'RE READY TO GRADUATE



# What is a PhD good for?



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## What will you gain?

Resilience

Endurance

Critical thinking

Self esteem

Intrinsic motivation

Can do-attitude

Courage

Leadership skills

Respect

Friends for life

...

## What will society expect from you?

Resilience

Endurance

Critical thinking

Initiative

Motivation and advice

Accountability

Courage

Insightfulness

Trustworthiness

...

**DON'T  
QUIT !**



# Entering the labor market with a PhD



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## What will be easier ?

- Avoiding routine
- Life long learning
- Work-life integration
- Freedom of thought
- Taking responsibility
- Visibility
- Securing leadership positions
- ...

## What will be harder ?

- Securing your first position
- Over qualification risk
- Work-life balance
- Higher expectations
- Visibility
- You follow the job market
- ...

## What are myths ?

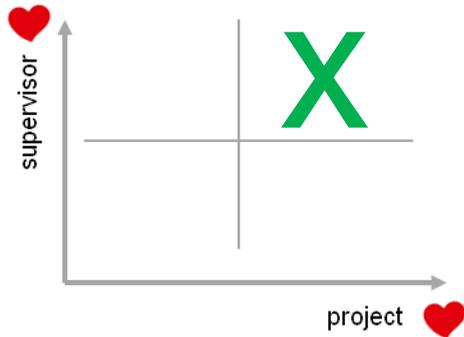
- Making more money
- Broader choice of jobs
- Job security
- ...

# How to manage a PhD?



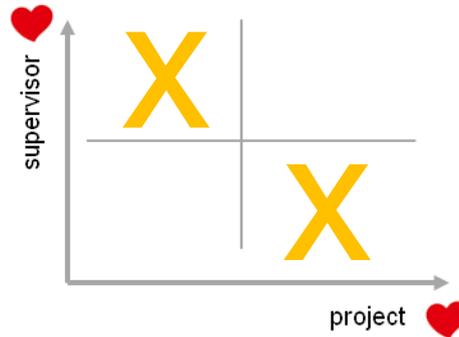
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Happiness, satisfaction, resilience, work-life balance



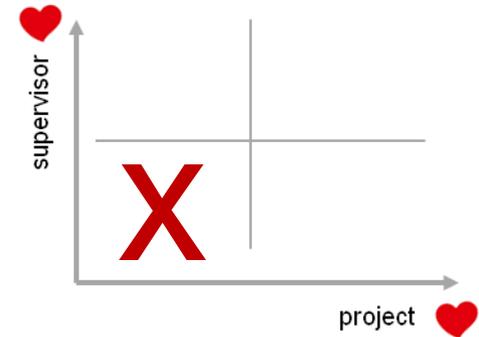
Great –

- keep going,
- nurture
- and enjoy!



Fix it –

- talk to people
- identify sinks
- keep observing!

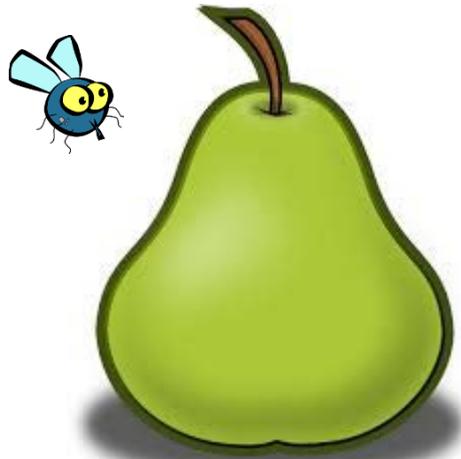


Drastic change is  
much needed –

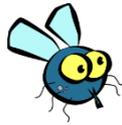
- talk to people
- think about plan B!



# Whom to contact if anything goes pear-shaped?



**Avoid the fly**



**turning into a big white elephant...**

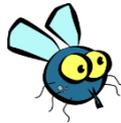


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**... communication is key!**

# Avoid the fly



# turning into a big white elephant...



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Talk (*selectively!*) to

- your supervisor
- your 2nd supervisor/mentor/TAC members
- your peers or the postdoc you work with
- the student representative(s)
- the PhD program coordinator
- **us – contact the Graduate Academy**
- the department head / Dean of Graduate Studies
- the equal opportunity office (Gleichstellungsbüro)
- the ombudsperson

**... and start talking early on; communication is key!**



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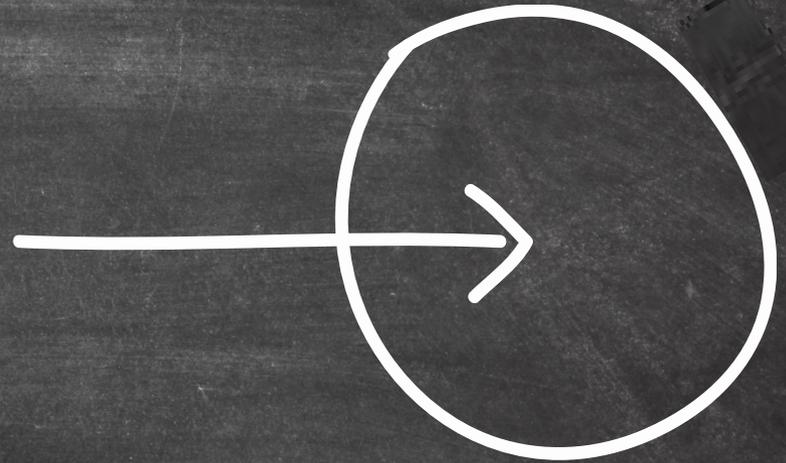
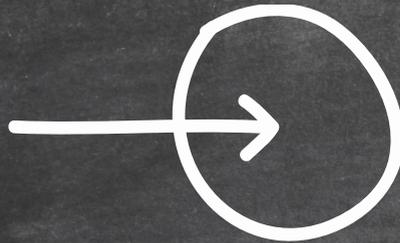
# What is a PhD?



2019

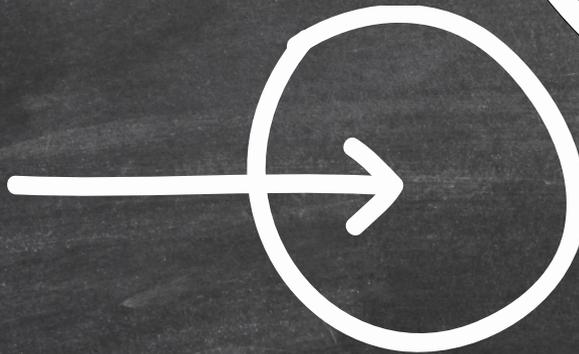
2022

your  
comfort  
zone



Adapted from <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CRvORSqUEAAED5t.jpg>

**your  
comfort  
zone**



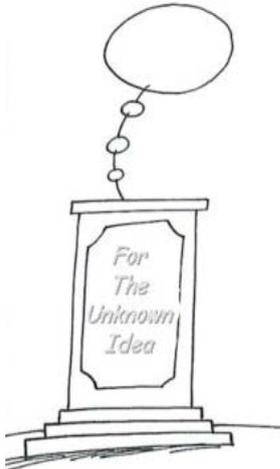
**Where the  
magic happens**

# Get in touch – stay in touch!



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There is always  
space for YOUR ideas:



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## THANK YOU & BEST OF SUCCESS!

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[helke.hillebrand@uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:helke.hillebrand@uni-heidelberg.de)

